

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in Claims 6 and 7. Claims 6 and 7 have been maintained in dependent form pending further disposition of the application in view of this Amendment.

Claims 1 and 5 have been amended to clarify that the slit of the outer jacket is formed through the outer jacket over an entire axial length of the outer jacket. Claims 3, 5, and 8 have been revised to address the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph and the drawing objection in relation to Claim 5. Further, Claims 1, 3, and 5-8 have been editorially revised to clarify the language and address antecedent basis issues. Claims 10-19 have been added to provide more comprehensive protection for certain aspects of the invention. Thus, Claims 1-19 are currently pending, with Claims 1, 5, and 14 being independent.

Claims 1-4, 8, and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ikeda et al. (USP 6,467,807). Claim 5 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being

unpatentable over Ikeda et al. in view of Yamamura et al. (USP 6,623,036).

Ikeda et al. is based on Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2001-347953 (Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-254210), the deficiencies of which were discussed in Applicants' specification (see pages 1-6). As noted therein, Ikeda et al. only provide an axial slit on the outer jacket at the location of the clamping portion. See, for example, FIGS. 5A and 8A of Ikeda et al., which shows slit (1) extending only partially along the length of an outer jacket (4). In contrast, Claims 1 and 5, as presently amended, recite that "said outer jacket is provided with a slit formed through said outer jacket over an entire axial length of said outer jacket". Unlike the configuration of Ikeda et al., the presently claimed structure allows for an enhanced retaining force since the whole outer jacket can be easily flexed during clamping without generating an axial gradient for the retaining force, as discussed in Applicants' specification (see, for example, page 7, lines 4-8). Ikeda et al. thus fail to teach or suggest Applicants' invention, at least as presently set forth in amended Claims 1 and 5.

Yamamura et al. does not remedy the above-noted deficiencies of Ikeda et al., as Yamamura et al. teach an outer jacket (2) provided with a slit (37 or 42) which is not formed over an entire axial length of the outer jacket. See, for example, FIGS. 2 and 3 of Yamamura et al.

Accordingly, independent Claims 1 and 5 patentably distinguish from the applied references. New independent Claim 14 is based on amended Claim 1, but recites a telescopic clamping "mechanism" rather than "means". Claim 14 is evidently allowable for at least the reasons set forth with regard to Claim 1 above.

For the reasons discussed above, Claims 1-19 are in condition for allowance, and an early Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 (XA-10442) any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing

of this paper and has not been separately requested, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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